

Bloomfield Citizen.

WEEKLY JOURNAL

PUBLISHED BY
WILLIAM A. RITSCHER, Jr.
at Bloomfield, Essex County, N. J.

Office: 802 Glenwood Avenue

Subscription, \$2.00 per year, in advance.
Six months, \$1.00; Three months, 50c.Entered at the Post-office at Bloomfield as second-class
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the general public on any subject—
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rent week must be in hand not later than
Friday noon.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 22, 1903.

Mr. Farrand's Report.

Councilman Herbert C. Farrand, Chairman of the Fire Committee of the Town Council, is the author of an extensive treaty on fire department needs, and the advocate of a series of recommendations in connection with housing and enlarging of the local fire department. Mr. Farrand advocates a departure from the system now in vogue of renting fire houses and recommends that the town purchase property and build houses. He has figured out to his own satisfaction that town ownership of the fire houses would be much cheaper than renting houses.

Mr. Farrand also proposes to enlarge the present volunteer fire department by the creation of another company to be located near the corner of Montgomery and Orchard streets. In all that he recommends and advocates, Mr. Farrand undoubtedly has solely in view the furnishing of proper and comfortable accommodation and necessary convenience to the men who make up the volunteer fire department of the town, and to extend its benefits as widely as possible in order to give the people of the town the advantages of the minimum rate of fire insurance.

It is not difficult to understand that Mr. Farrand may be sincere in the advocacy of his recommendations, and believe them to be both advantageous and economic. But a man may sincerely hold mistaken views and misapprehend the consensus of opinion of the majority of the body of taxpayers whose conditions and needs should take precedence in all matters pertaining to the common wealth. In the first place Mr. Farrand's report is in one sense intentionally sophistical or he has failed to give his subject sufficiently close consideration in all its details.

Mr. Farrand states broadly that the town now pays \$1,725 per annum in rentals, and by the adoption of his plan the total interest charges would be only \$1,200, thereby affecting a saving of \$525 per annum to the taxpayers. Mr. Farrand has perhaps overlooked the fact that his scheme involves the elimination of upwards of \$16,000 worth of real property from the present tax rates of the town, and adding it to the property exempt from taxation gauged by the present standard of valuations for taxing purposes, and the current tax rate thus means an annual loss to the town in revenue of nearly \$300, which reduces the saving to \$275.

The matter of fire insurance on the numerous buildings that Mr. Farrand would have the town own would be much more than what the town is now paying in that line, and would tend to make another considerable reduction in the proposed savings.

In the second place, Mr. Farrand fails to give assurances to the taxpayers of the cost of maintenance of his elaborate plan of buildings.

The maintenance cost of a substantial building like the Bloomfield National Bank for heat, light, janitor's services, and ordinary repairs, must be some where between twelve and fifteen hundred dollars per annum, and nobody will dispute but what the most rigid economy is enforced in the expense account of the bank building. The town pays \$1,000 per annum for its privileges in the bank building. Now the question is can the town purchase the building and furnish these same privileges in the same excellent manner for the same cost? It is hardly necessary to argue that it cannot.

The cost of maintaining a large frame building like the Nash building for public use would be enormous. The building and grounds would have to be put up in an attractive state, and the interior expense added to the exterior pens would far exceed a rental of \$1,000 per annum, and the Nash building would only be one of five buildings that would have to be maintained up to a higher standard than the present houses, and the higher standard means much higher cost.

But the feature of Mr. Farrand's report that will occasion the gravest concern to taxpayers is the proposition to enlarge the fire department by the action of another company. This corporation that has been rejected by various Councils when the town was in such financial straits, as it is present, and why Mr. Farrand should raise the project and advocate it under present unfavorable conditions is conceivable.

A Needless Expenditure.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CITIZEN:

SIR: The town of Bloomfield has more fire houses and firemen per capita than any other town in the State of its size in taxable valuation. In the face of such an existing condition it appears preposterous to undertake an enlargement of the fire department by the creation of another company. Small property owners, and they are numerous in this town, are burdened to the limit with taxation now, and without any encouraging prospect in sight for lower taxes in the future.

To propose a plan that will add \$1,000 to the annual fire appropriation in order to maintain another fire company is overloading the willing horse. It would be more compassionate and appropriate if members of the Council would devote their energies and talents in the direction of a reduction of the floating indebtedness and the fixed expenditures of the town, rather than recommending schemes for increasing the burden of taxes. There is not a ward in the city of Newark that has the fire protection that the house owner in the town of Bloomfield has, yet many of the city wards are several times over as large as Bloomfield in population and taxable wealth. If an equitable distribution of fire protection was the question at issue, Brookdale people have a better claim than any other part of the town, and the Brookdale people will no doubt vigorously protest against any further enlargement of the fire department, and there will be no doubt as to the justice of their protest. But Brookdale will not be alone in a protest against Mr. Farrand's project. There is no necessity for an enlargement of the fire department, and a large increase in exemptions from taxation would grow out of such a move. Bloomfield now pays annually nearly \$2,500 per annum in loss of taxes for firemen and soldiers, and the tendency is always toward an increase of the exemption list.

Another reason why there should be no further enlargement of the volunteer fire department by the creation of another company is that the volunteer fire department is in a state of rapid transition toward a paid department, when the apparatus and men of a single fire house would do the work now done by the several fire companies.

It is just such absurd propositions as this one of enlarging the fire department that give food and strength to the considerable element in the town that favors annexation to Newark. The annexationists are only awaiting an opportunity to renew the agitation of their project, and high tax rates and prospective increased tax rates afford effective ammunition for them. If the men in official authority here want to preserve the independence of Bloomfield they will have to kill for the present all measures tending towards an increase of public expenditures.

Transfers Righted.

By an order which went into effect Monday the transfer difficulty complained of by Bloomfield patrons of the North Jersey and Orange and Passaic Valley trolley lines was settled.

Since the first of the month, when the transfer point was established at Bloomfield Centre, as the result of the absorption of the North Jersey Street Railway Company and the Orange and Passaic Valley Railway Company by the Public Service Corporation, there has been much complaint on the part of the passengers over the muddled condition of affairs. Sometimes a passenger would get a transfer and sometimes he would not. Each conductor seemed to be a law unto himself.

As a general thing a passenger coming from Newark and wishing to transfer to the crosstown line would not be given a transfer unless he paid another fare after he crossed the city line. Of course this was no transfer privilege at all, and many hot arguments followed between passengers and conductors in consequence. "It's our orders," was all the conductors would say by way of explanation.

Sometimes the conductors charged seven cents for the transfer on the rule that a passenger getting on the car in this town for Newark must pay seven cents if he wants a transfer good in that city. A few of the conductors, rather than have an argument over the matter, would give the transfers on the five-cent fare without question.

This situation was particularly annoying to the passenger from Newark who wanted to transfer at the Centre, because of the fact that he could reach his destination on a five-cent fare by a roundabout way, going to Orange and then transferring to the crosstown line at Main and Day streets.

"There was some misunderstanding over the matter at first," said one of the officials on Monday, "but it has all been cleared up now. I have issued an order, which goes into effect to-day, that all passengers from Newark to Bloomfield must be given transfers if they ask for them when they pay their fares. I do not expect any more misunderstanding. The transfer point at the Centre will be the same as at any other point. Passengers on the crosstown line will be given transfers to Newark and to Montclair without question. Those going to Montclair will be given an identification slip, that they can be passed at the Glen Ridge line by the Inspector."

The largest freight house for local service on the Lackawanna system will be erected at Bloomfield. The building as planned will be sufficiently large to accommodate more than 100 freight cars, and work on the structure will be started at once.—Dover Era.

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Letter from Dr. C. W. Harrison.

BROWNSVILLE, TEX., August 12, 1903.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CITIZEN:

Brownsville, the southernmost city of the United States, is a point of very great interest. Here General Taylor with his army of occupation in 1846 took the initial in the war with Mexico, which ended in the acquisition of California and a large tract of the northern portion of Mexico temporarily. Brownsville is one of the oldest of southern cities, which has long been isolated, having meagre means of communication; still it has grown slowly and has been measurably prosperous.

During the present summer, notwithstanding the absence of the gulf winds, which usually give cool nights, health conditions have been nearly perfect. The old denizens are enthusiastic over the country hereabouts. The section is far enough away from the gulf to be outside the path of the sweeping, swirling storms which bring disaster to the coast towns. Besides, we have here veritably the garden spot of the earth. This country is at last to be opened up, two railroads being already in process of construction, making necessary connections with the system of State railroads, and Brownsville in direct touch with the large cities of Central Texas. Heretofore everything in the way of travel has been done by stage coaches, or round-about from Galveston to Port Isabel by boat, thence a distance of twenty miles by means of a narrow-gauge railroad. All freight overland has had to be hauled 150 miles by ox teams. The passenger coaches traverse the distance from Alice to Brownsville—150 miles straight—in thirty-six hours, occupying one night and two days in the journey, never stopping along the route except to exchange horses and give passengers a chance to dine. This in two seat hacks makes anything but an enjoyable trip, for which the modest sum of \$15 is exacted. The route by way of Galveston is not more enjoyable. The rate is the same. Owing to low tide at Brazos Santiago, just outside of Port Isabel, the boat is compelled to anchor for any old interval from two hours to two, three or four days before opportunity comes in the way of high water sufficient to cross the bar. Then arriving at Port Isabel the boat has to anchor two miles from the shore, while passengers effect a landing by small boats and freight is unloaded by means of lighters. Then the one-horse railway carries passengers and freight into Brownsville. Now a change impends and with prospects assured this section of country, is to be rated as good, better, best of all for the man with the hoe, upon these rich, alluvial soils, inexhaustible in their fertility, with a system of irrigation easily provided, commands fortune. We are in the artesian well belt, and there is only needed the boring to bring forth gushing streams of water.

Well, then, given the land and the water, what of it? Why, best for our man with the hoe, backed by a fair modicum of brains? Just this, and it is fact. He can raise anything that can be raised, and with the new railroads have it in market from two to six weeks earlier than the other so-called favored spots of southern country. California will be compelled to yield to the lower Rio Grande Valley. What California produces this section can produce; and more of it, better and earlier. All winter through the farmer may grow and ship the hardier vegetables, and be first of all in the great markets of the country with the tenderer and more succulent varieties. This end of Uncle Sam's domain, so long hid under a bushel, is producing rice of the best grade abundantly. Beside fruits of all sorts, tropic and semi-tropic, need but the planting and ordinary culture to yield scripturally. There is no enemy to trouble save the jackdaw, a bird ravenously fond of fruit. To-day in Brownsville, standing on lawns without cultivation, growing in Bermuda grass soil (as tough as any on earth) are thrifty lemon and orange trees so loaded with fruit that the branches are borne nearly to earth. Banana trees are heavily fruited, and lesser fruits may be produced, galore. One could go on like Tennyson's brook in the enumeration without limit. There is one thing that occurs to me as I bring the matter in review, why, oh why, do the farmers of old Sussex toll from early dawn till night descends to keep down the interest on a mortgage covering the home farm, when with one-fourth the energy they now devote to their own lands they could here obtain a competence.

Brownsville is a quaint old town, with a variety of architecture from the Mexican shack to the stately mansion. Its business interests are varied, and then with the railroads completed will make the place a booming centre of agricultural trade. As a winter resort it should command patronage.

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